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ABSTRACT

This report presents results from interviews with a sampling of experienced Equipped for the Future (EFF) users. Chapter I provides background and context for this initiative. Chapter II provides facts and figures from the field and presents questions posed and interviewees' views. The questions are as follows: (1) Why did you or your organization decided to use EFF?; (2) How have you used EFF in your program and at what stage of implementation are you?; (3) What results do you get from use of EFF?; (4) Are you better off using EFF than other approaches, and can you explain why?; (5)What data do you collect and how is it used?; (6) Do you get EFF technical support when needed and from whom?; (7) What kind of staff training have you required to apply EFF?; (8) How could EFF be more widely used in your state or program to expand outreach, improve learning quality, provide instructional services that adults really need, and assess effectiveness?; (9) How important is EFF to your future, and what if it disappeared?; and (10) Is there sufficient awareness at the state and national level of what EFF has to offer, and what would you suggest to improve awareness? Chapter III concludes that the majority of users are enthusiastic about EFF; most see it as vital to current and future programming and for the systemwide reform they believe is needed; and when asked to imagine a future without EFF, most describe serious, even disastrous, setbacks to efforts to improve quality of literacy services and program accountability. Twenty readings are suggested. (YLB)

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Equipped for the Future

Tools & Standards For Building & Assessing Quality Adult Literacy Programs

by Gail Spangenberg & Sarah Watson

May 2003

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TOOLS & STANDARDS FOR BUILDING & ASSESSING QUALITY ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

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FOREWORD

One of the Council's founding purposes is to promote more effective policy, practice, and resource development at the state level. In keeping with that broad purpose, this publication tells a remarkable story, about Equipped for the Future – a singularly important resource developed by the National Institute for Literacy that can be tremendously beneficial to states wanting to improve the effectiveness of their adult literacy services. Because of EFF's potential, CAAL hopes the publication will enhance understanding among programs and policymakers at all levels.

Gail Spangenberg, co-author of this paper, is president of the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, based in New York City. Her background in adult education and literacy spans more than three decades. It includes grant making in adult literacy, urban higher education, and nontraditional education at several major foundations, directing the programs of the Business Council for Effective Literacy for a decade, the conduct of several studies in adult education and literacy, and service on numerous national and state advisory boards in workforce and general adult literacy.

Sarah Watson, co-author, has been involved in education for more than 20 years. She recently served as the Governor's senior advisor for literacy in Illinois, and director of the Governor's Office on Literacy. She has worked extensively with statewide literacy initiatives, and with the Illinois legislature and literacy stakeholders on policy to improve literacy in the state. She was on the faculty of the 2002 literacy institute sponsored by Harvard University and the National Governors' Association. Earlier, she was responsible for corporate education at American General Financial Group.

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE:
Tools & Standards For Building & Assessing Quality Adult Literacy Programs

Gail Spangenberg and Sarah Watson

I. JOURNEY TO NEW FRONTIERS

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." With this adage, Andrew Hartman, former Executive Director of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), introduced NIFL's *Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century (January 2000).* Mr. Hartman understood how important it was for adult students and their teachers to share the same vision of the content and goals of teaching and learning.

NIFL's publication followed years of extensive field work. It sets forth the goals of Equipped for the Future (EFF), gives a detailed history of its research process, and explains the building blocks and rationale developed to ensure that adult education and literacy programs across the nation will be meaningful and effective – *based on established principles of functional context learning.*

In 1994, EFF asked this question: "What, in fact, do adults need to know to accomplish their goals and to function successfully as workers, parents, and citizens in the 21st Century?" The question sprang from a Congressional mandate for NIFL to help achieve the National Education Goal's lifelong learning goal #6: *Every adult will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.*

With extensive participation by hundreds of practitioners, researchers, and other recognized professionals, the EFF staff set out to get answers to their question. They actively involved the best minds from across the country in various ways. They formed a national policy group, four advisory groups (with a total of 46 members, in the life role areas of citizenship, community, parenting and family responsibility, and on-the-job performance), a team of technical advisors, 152 field development partners in 13 states, an expert review panel (44 members), and three "role map" validation groups.

Six years later, this bold EFF initiative had achieved wide and deep consensus on what constitutes a valid and appropriate set of standards for teaching, assessing, and improving adult literacy programs. The resulting framework does not proscribe an actual program or curriculum; it spells out proven critical ingredients for adult educators and students to follow as they design curricula and assess outcomes that relate to the needs of students in their multiple roles as parents, workers, and citizens.

EFF Director Sondra Stein describes the program's standards (all directed to the skills of reading, writing, math, oral communication, and problem solving) as a set of goals for learners that have been set by Congress and adult learners themselves. She notes that the standards are a powerful tool to improve results since they not only make clear what the goals of instruction should be, but provide a way to align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and accountability. They provide the essential "starting point for system reform."

The adult education and literacy field as we presently know it has been more than 40 years in the making. But until the EFF framework was constructed, learners, educators, and policymakers alike were without a common language or listing of skills by which to design and assess high quality programs and guide their

investments. With EFF, this was no longer the case. Indeed, many people in the field regard EFF as the strongest example of NIFL leadership in the past decade.

Nearly all of the benchmark studies and reports in adult literacy since the 1970s have recognized the importance of contextual learning – for example, *The Adult Performance Level Study* commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education in the 1970s, the Ford Foundation's *Adult Illiteracy in America* (by Carmen St. John Hunter and David Harman, McGraw-Hill, 1979), the Southport Institute's *Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy* (1989), *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance* (Secretary's Commission on Necessary Skills, SCANS, 1992), *Adult Literacy in America* (the National Adult Literacy Survey, 1993), and The National Education Goals Report *Building A Nation of Learners* (1993).

According to NIFL, SCANS provided an especially important research base for the EFF initiative. Other driving forces were the National Literacy Act of 1991 (which placed responsibility on NIFL for tracking the progress of adult literacy students) and the General Accounting Office (GAO). Just after the EFF initiative began, GAO published a report questioning the quality and purposes of the adult education and literacy enterprise. In *Adult Education: Measuring Program Results Has Been Challenging* (1994), GAO described the difficulties of evaluating program results for lack of clearly-defined objectives, accurate data, and suitable assessment. Already recognized by NIFL, GAO pointed to "the lack of a coherent vision of the skills and knowledge adults need to be considered literate."

Thus, informed by a plethora of past studies and facing numerous new challenges, the EFF program was launched. It was squarely on target.

NIFL undertook several strands of work between 1994 and 2000. Simply put, these were as follows:

(1) In 1994-95, tutors, adult learners, researchers, and others in the adult literacy system were surveyed to determine the skills and knowledge critical to meeting the National Education Goals' goal #6. Nine organizations* received NIFL grants of about $50,000 each to validate the EFF content framework as a starting point for standards in adult literacy.

(2) In 1996-97, a series of structured feedback sessions were held across the country with people recognized as "exemplary" in their communities. The purpose was to build consensus on what adults need to *do* and *know* to meet their multiple responsibilities as workers, parents, and citizens.

(3) In 1998-99, based on the work done in steps one and two, NIFL formulated the categories and standards that now make up the common EFF framework. The result was 16 standards, in four skills categories, as set forth below:

Communication Skills
- Read with Understanding
- Convey Ideas in Writing
- Speak So That Others Can Understand
- Observe Critically
- Listen Actively

Decision-Making Skills
- Solve Problems and Make Decisions
- Plan
- Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate

Interpersonal Skills
- Cooperate with Others
- Guide Others
- Advocate and Influence
- Resolve Conflict and Negotiate

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* The nine organizations were the Adult Numeracy Practitioners Network, the Center for Adult Learning & Literacy at the University of Maine/Orono, the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy, the Minneapolis Public Schools Adult Literacy Program, the National Center for Family Literacy, the North Carolina Literacy Resource Center, the San Diego Community College/CWELL, and World Education.

Lifelong Learning Skills

- Take Responsibility for Learning
- Learn Through Research
- Reflect and Evaluate
- Use Information and Communications Technology

(4) In 2000, *Equipped for the Future Content Standards* was published and widely disseminated. NIFL launched a still on-going training and technical assistance program to help states use the new standards. A Center for Training and Technical Assistance, including a trainer certification system, was established. It is based at the University of Tennessee. Work, still in process, also began on defining an assessment framework for the standards, and a new Center for Assessment was set up.

II. FACTS, FIGURES, & VOICES FROM THE FIELD

NIFL has documented EFF's journey thoroughly every step of the way. (A wide range of publications, a glossary of terms, and fact sheets are available from NIFL at http://www.nifl.gov.)

According to NIFL, from 2000 to 2002 (through the EFF Center for Training and Technical Assistance), more than 4,500 teachers and administrators from 34 states received training and technical assistance in how to use the EFF standards to improve the quality of instruction and assessment in their programs.

Today, after a total investment of only $8.5 million, surprisingly modest considering the scope of the enterprise, some 600 adult literacy programs in 38 states are using the EFF framework to guide their teaching and learning. Eighteen states are using EFF-established standards to improve the quality of one or more of their adult learning systems. Key national organizations such as the National Center

for Family Literacy, the National Urban League, ProLiteracy, and the National Retail Federation are using EFF as an integral part of their own training and program improvement systems.

Moreover, a whole range of training materials, handbooks, implementation tools, and other activities have been under development since 2002. For instance, EFF's Reading Project has turned out a program component that integrates evidence-based research with the teaching of reading. NIFL, the Partnership for Reading, the National Center for Family Literacy, and the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Missouri, and Virginia are partners in this effort. EFF has given extensive training to the Retail Academies of the National Retail Foundation and the National Urban League. It has been working with the Adult Literacy Media Alliance (TV-411), Crossroads Café, and On Common Ground (INTELECOM) to integrate EFF into those multimedia curricular programs. It has also been working with the states of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas on a work-readiness credential. In addition, some publishers (including Steck Vaughan and New Readers Press) are in discussion with EFF to introduce EFF into their publications.

EFF has also begun to provide leadership on the international front. Its work is featured in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's initiative, *Defining and Selecting Competencies that Define a Successful Life*. Groups in Chile, Japan, and Singapore are working with EFF to define and build work competencies, and UNESCO is interested in the EFF competency definition process for its literacy work in Africa.

These facts and figures show that EFF is having an enormous and positive effect wherever it is understood and being used. But what do users themselves have to say about the role and potential of EFF at this stage? To help get a sense of this, the authors interviewed a sampling of experienced EFF users. The questions posed

and their views are presented below. Most have given their time and talents over a period of many years to help EFF become a comprehensive standards-based system. The interviewees were:

JOANI ALLEN, National Trainer, Equipped for the Future, Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee

BRENDA BELL, Associate Director, Center for Literacy Studies, and Co-Director, EFF Assessment Consortium, University of Tennessee

SANDY CHEEK, Director of Basic Skills and Parent Co-op Preschools, Big Bend Community College, Washington

SARAH CONRAD, Director, Retail Skills Center, National Retail Federation Foundation

SHARON DARLING, President, National Center for Family Literacy

LANSING DAVIS, Education Director, New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

AILEEN HOKAMA, Principal, Moanalua/Aiea Community School for Adults, Hawaii

PAUL JURMO, Former Deputy Education Director, Consortium for Worker Education; Adjunct Professor, New York University

JANE MEYER, Coordinator of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, Canton School District, Ohio

LENNOX MCLENDON, Director, National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC)

EMBY MILLER, Director, Education & Youth Services, Columbus Urban League

MARY MOORHOUSE, Workforce Development Coordinator, National Retail Federation Foundation

KRISTIN OCKERT, Program Administrator for Basic Skills, Work First, and Professional Development, Office of Adult Literacy, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Washington State

NANCY SLEDD, Senior Training Specialist, National Center for Family Literacy

BARBARA VAN HORN, Co-Director, Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, and Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, Penn State University

JANET ZOBEL, Senior Policy Advisor, National Urban League

1. WHY DID YOU OR YOUR ORGANIZATION DECIDE TO USE EFF?

ALLEN: I did field research for the State of Washington as an ESL teacher. By using EFF, I saw a remarkable change in the classroom and never wanted to go back to any other curriculum. Teaching to standards and principles of EFF was very effective. The classroom came alive because purposeful teaching starts with the student – with goal setting and needs assessment. Teaching is relationship dependent. I observed some very specific outcomes: I knew what students wanted to learn, making it purposeful education. Students began to know what they were learning; they could recognize the skills they were learning.

BELL: I have been involved since inception. We had a first-year planning grant to look more closely at the intersection of the EFF Roles and Purposes: access to information, voice, independent action, and bridge to the future. We went on to lead efforts for the development of an EFF assessment framework. We now coordinate all field research and act as a repository for all field data.

CHEEK: EFF represents what we believe is necessary for adult education, it needs to be relevant to learners and allow room for the student's voice. The important research came from the students themselves, which is critical. That means it is really the right stuff. It matches what the students have been trying to do and learn. As a program, we are always looking for new and innovative ways to improve. EFF resonated with our beliefs and experiences about what works with adults. We also felt that it was to our advantage to get involved with the research project and to give our faculty and students a direct connection to EFF and what it means to implement EFF in your classroom. Doing the research was a good way to make that happen.

DARLING: We were involved in the initial stages of development because I was on the board of the National Institute for Literacy. I believed the field of adult education needed standards, and needed curriculum and assessment, so I was very excited about watching the development of EFF.

DAVIS: The New Jersey Workforce Investment Board (WIB) created a state unified plan for workforce development which talked about bringing all relevant partners

together, working through a structure of committees and councils. One of the councils is a literacy council. About two years ago this council looked for something to hang its hat on in mapping a statewide direction for adult education. We needed a broad set of policies to guide the system. Until then, the system was fragmented with little state-level coordination. We needed a vision. The council chose EFF as its framework for adult education and developed policies around that framework. All the state agencies with responsibility for literacy are on the council. EFF speaks to issues in workforce development, but it maintains the other areas of adult education, too, recognizing that adults have responsibilities to family and community, as well as their jobs. All the stakeholders can relate to EFF; everyone can nod in unison. Everyone involved understands – business officials, adult educators, students, and the WIB.

HOKAMA: Through the Hawaii Department of Education (HDOE), Hawaii has eleven community schools statewide operating adult education and literacy programs. The HDOE manages all K-12 schools in the state. Hawaii has the only unitary school district. The HDOE adopted standards for its K-12 system. Simultaneously, the community schools were seeking ways to become more accountable. We believed the adoption of standards would keep us aligned with the K-12 school system and also enable us to become more accountable to students. In a Strategic Plan developed in 2000, the community schools committed themselves to the adoption of standards. Thus, we began researching to determine if standards were available that we believed in. We wondered if we would have to write our own standards. But then we learned about EFF. I was thoroughly impressed with the process by which EFF developed its standards. The fact that they were developed with input from students, that research supported the standards, and that there were clear performance indicators for each EFF standard – this was all very impressive.

For my school, I saw the EFF standards specifically as a way to provide greater clarity in establishing goals for our ESL and ABE programs (we've not gotten to our GED classes yet). The EFF standards also help us provide consistency in what and how we teach. Moreover, EFF focused our staff development activities for teachers. In short, the EFF standards provide coherency in our curriculum, instructional approach, and accountability for student learning. We also adopted the EFF standards as our Expected School Wide Learning Results (required by the Western Association for Schools and Colleges for accreditation). The standards are displayed in all of our classrooms as a reminder to teachers and students that our goal is for students to develop proficiency in those standards.

MEYER: From my first experiences in adult education, I did not feel the system was designed to really meet the needs of the students. I began adding real-life materials and found that our students were gaining so much more than just the reading and math gains tested by the TABE. I'm referring to skills we were not measuring and did not really know how to measure, such as when parents improve their ability to solve

problems by looking at a variety of options for getting their child to school on time. We saw parents learn to resolve conflicts with the school in positive ways and they actually began working with the school. So, when I heard a brief presentation on EFF, I jumped at it and began using it right away. I felt like we had been doing a good job meeting students' needs. But we had no way to articulate what we were doing (to students, to stakeholders, and to each other within the program) beyond the typical questions about reading and math attainment. Furthermore, we had no framework for looking at the whole picture and deciding what pieces we needed to work on with particular students. The role maps and skills wheel of EFF gave us what we needed.

MCLENDON: When I was State Director of Education in Virginia, we chose EFF because it offered the most promise for redesigning instructional systems for meeting the needs of adult learners. Now, at NAEPDC, we are providing technical assistance to states in any area that they request.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: Though the National Retail Federation (NRF) works on a national level, some of the best work we've done with EFF has been in New Jersey. New Jersey is an EFF state. NRF got involved with developing skill standards for sales associates 6 -7 years ago. NIFL learned what we were doing, and asked to look at what we were developing and how the work might dovetail with EFF. The skills standards were most closely linked to communication. NIFL wanted to compare NRF's standards with EFF's. As a result, EFF's framework was integrated with NRF's to create a curriculum. The intent is for learners to reach sales associate competencies and skill sets through the EFF framework. Each NRF training site uses the curriculum as appropriate to their needs.

JURMO: I learned about EFF at several conferences and it made sense. I liked EFF's emphasis on defining basic skills in a broad way (the 16 standards) and in context (i.e. in terms of the three life roles that most people play). I also trusted NIFL and the people running the project. I was pleased to find that EFF provides a framework of appropriate goals for adult literacy efforts, a more comprehensive definition of basic skills, and a network of creative, thoughtful people with whom to work. One thing I especially like about EFF is that it acknowledges the complexities of learners as persons. The many EFF charts include three learner Role Maps that recognize that learners function not only as workers but also as parents, family members, and community members. EFF provides much more substance than traditional ways of defining and teaching basic skills. Traditionally, basic skills programs have either been eclectic and/or lacking in understanding about how people learn and what possessing the basic skills really means for adults.

OCKERT: Washington State became involved during the initial research on what makes people effective in their roles as family members, workers, and community

members. We participated in the section on the family role. We were aware that while adult basic skills instructors and administrators work hard to provide these services, retention and achievements were not as high as we wanted them to be. We theorized that part of the problem could be a siloed approach to teaching that built on old K-12 approaches to education that might not be effective with adults. EFF provided a comprehensive, research-based framework through which we felt we could test and accelerate the implementation of best practice approaches that engaged adults and taught them the basic skills needed to function successfully in their daily lives.

SLEDD: I train and provide technical assistance for programs funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Family Assistance and Child Education (FACE) programs. FACE sites are required to use the EFF framework and certified EFF trainers. FACE has programs in 13 states using the EFF framework. I worked with the Kentucky State Department of Adult Education and Literacy as a regional professional development coordinator. When NIFL first published its wonderful framework for everything we're supposed to be doing, it made sense immediately and pulled everything together. I got my training in Kentucky and studied everything I could. When I joined the National Center for Family Literacy, which was closely connected to NIFL, I was able to access other programs to be a trainer. I now provide EFF through our various programs. The framework just makes sense, and it works. It's so sound and well-researched, and is the most important recent development to affect practice.

VAN HORN: We don't provide direct service to students; we train teachers who teach in the adult literacy field. We always believed that learning must be contextual to be meaningful. I was drawn to the combination in EFF of the role that adults fulfill in life and what they need to do it effectively. I like the fact that EFF was developed from the ground up, by drawing on a broad base of people. It can be applied to all adults. It's the only framework for thinking about adult education that can be used for curriculum development.

ZOBEL: The National Urban League provides social services and civil rights training to African Americans and other people of color by promoting education and youth development, economic self-sufficiency, and racial justice and inclusion. We have 100 offices around the country that provide services to African-Americans in inner-city communities. One of our most important services is to assure equal opportunity for our clients in educational competitiveness in the workforce. We decided on EFF because it developed a framework that puts adult literacy and work preparation in a context that helps our teachers to be more effective. In other words, EFF is being infused into our delivery process to make it better.

2. HOW HAVE YOU USED EFF IN YOUR PROGRAM AND AT WHAT STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION ARE YOU?

CHEEK: Since the State of Washington has adopted EFF as the framework for adult education and literacy, we, as a local program, likewise have adopted it as the framework for our curriculum. Because EFF is a framework, not a curriculum, it may be more difficult for programs that have not been part of the research projects. EFF flies in the face of conventional curriculum development where lesson plans are beautifully developed and perfected. Students are the starting point for EFF and the instructor must be skilled in helping them articulate their needs. Lesson plans are developed collaboratively. This is difficult for many teachers who are used to the structure of books and traditional lessons. The EFF teaching and learning tool kit that's coming out is going to be fabulous. It gives very concrete ways to set goals with students. Washington was one of the first states to adopt EFF. We are deeply committed to working through the logistics and growing pains.

EFF is infused into our curriculum and into the language we use to describe what goes on in the classroom. The standards are used as springboards for activities and for framing instruction. Teachers teach to enhance the skill level of students in the performance components of the chosen standard. The teachers who are involved in piloting the assessment tasks (the latest stage of the research) are using EFF tasks to assess student performance.

DARLING: We don't actually implement programs; we have training assistants who try to help programs and we use EFF Role Maps in some of our adult education efforts.

DAVIS: New Jersey is in the infancy stage in implementing EFF as a statewide framework for adult literacy. However, the intent is for EFF to be the framework for all state adult education/literacy programming.

HOKAMA: Similar to the majority of community schools across the nation, we face the challenge of a transient teaching staff (all are part-time personnel). We have, however, provided several awareness sessions for our teachers. For the past three years, we have provided two yearly EFF staff development opportunities for the teachers. Coordinators at our two sites have augmented these staff development activities through monthly meetings with their teachers for informal discussion and sharing. Our teachers are now at the stage where they working together to develop instructional plans for the standards. We clearly are not yet at the "pervasive stage"

where EFF would be obvious if you walked into any of our classes -- and that's where we want to be! But teachers know that the expectation is for them to implement the EFF standards and the accompanying "teaching and learning cycle."

JURMO: The Consortium for Worker Education serves a large network of basic literacy, ESL, GED, work-readiness, and computer training programs. After two EFF training sessions I was able to figure out how to integrate it into our adult education program, starting with our introductory computer curriculum and working with teachers. Weaving the EFF skills into computer instruction, for which there is such high demand, helps learners see how they can communicate, make decisions, and build better personal relationships. We also incorporated EFF into an ambitious job-related ESL/computer skills program for unemployed immigrant garment workers. EFF is helping to align programs with the National Reporting System. That's good.

MEYER: We use EFF as the framework for our program. We plan instructional themes around the EFF common activities, teach in the context of the roles, and plan instruction and assessment around the standards. We use approaches that are purposeful, transparent, contextual, and constructivist. We use EFF to articulate what we are doing within the program, to students and to stakeholders such as funders and collaborating partners. An example of our use of EFF is learners (who are also parents) being asked to develop a family math night at their children's school. They had to use their basic skills to develop a budget, present their plan to the school administrators, and plan the event. They incorporated reading, math, and writing skills, plus oral communication skills. It was very practical.

MCLENDON: All states are now required to develop content standards. EFF has the technical assistance available to help them do this, either by adapting EFF or developing their own. Content standards are a really tricky thing to develop.

MILLER: We use EFF in our continuous improvement process. We use it in our adult education classes to enhance the quality of what's already there. The student wants to know, how is this going to help me achieve my GED diploma? Why is it good? However, we can't use EFF in situations where student academic levels pretest too low.

OCKERT: In early 1998, even before the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) passed, we began the process of developing our state plan for literacy. In public forums and focus groups with instructors, students, business, labor, and agency partners, we heard consistently that the adult basic skills system should do three things: 1) increase its

focus on adult and community needs and goals, 2) improve instructional strategies so that students leave programs with the skills they came to acquire, and 3) measure what's important, not just what is easily measured. EFF fit in perfectly. In 1999, we began to pilot an intensive effort to implement EFF in our WorkFirst family literacy program called Families That Work (FTW). We focused on the family and worker roles. We met quarterly to share best practices, and funded on-site activities for program and staff development in EFF. Also, the English Language and Civics program (EL/Civics) helped to promote more EFF implementation in ESL instruction. We are in varying stages of EFF implementation around the state, largely depending on the extent to which programs participate in the FTW and EL/Civics programs, and how they integrate those approaches into their regular basic skills program.

SLEDD: Over a year ago, we became partners with NIFL on the EFF Reading Project, which demonstrates how EFF works in a specific context. The project provides training on how to use evidence-based research on reading instruction in EFF's purposeful and contextual approach to family literacy instruction. The training is being piloted in 20 programs, included five FACE sites. The pilot includes eight days of training over an eight-month period, with time to practice and technical assistance in between. Everybody did a final project. Evaluation of the finished training is nearly done and a revised version will be ready by October. As an extension of the training, adult educator instructors for all 32 FACE sites had two days of awareness training in how to use EFF.

VAN HORN: We have developed work-based foundation skills in Pennsylvania built from EFF worker role maps. We added the content knowledge areas. We use this as a way to develop customized workplace systems with employers. These programs are very popular.

3. WHAT RESULTS ARE YOU GETTING FROM YOUR USE OF EFF?

ALLEN: It has taken a long time to build products based on research from the field – everyone has been very careful. Over the last two years, EFF products have been developed. These translate straight to the classroom and they benchmark tasks. We will soon have a program development handbook which, I think, will change the way the staff views instruction by looking at student needs first.

CHEEK: Well! Retention, especially with ABE, is excellent and they move ahead. Level gains have been growing slowly but it would be hard to isolate EFF as the factor that drives that. We do know that EFF has allowed us to globalize our curriculum. We can infuse goals that are relevant to the students' lives. The academic skills are imbedded in the work they are doing. For example, a student may be planning a small

business and must use math, reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. This really empowers the students. They are developing a sense of who they are, and their own voice. They see *why* they need to improve themselves.

DARLING: We do family literacy so our training is around the process of putting together the pieces of adult education, childhood education, and parent education. As part of that, in some cases, we try to do actual adult education training. For instance, we are working right now with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to build a customized framework for Native Americans. We are also working with NIFL to developing EFF training just around reading.

HOKAMA: EFF is a powerful means to reform. While we are still taking "baby steps" in the full implementation of standards-based instruction, the introduction of standards has definitely made a difference. Learning is taking place in more authentic situations. We have "soft data" from students that learning is more enjoyable and meaningful. I hope that soon students will be able to articulate exactly what they have learned and how they have or will use that learning in their personal lives. We know we are better off now than before we began using EFF because teachers' discussions are beginning to focus on what they teach and how they teach. Clearly, we have established new goals for classrooms. On a management level, the staff and our site coordinators have also begun to use the common language of EFF.

The Reading Assessments soon to be made available through EFF will be another giant step for us. While the standards have established expectations for our teachers and students, the performance assessments will bring greater clarity by providing a "permanent target" for teaching and learning. What a tremendous tool. The rubrics provide specificity that is presently lacking. EFF assessments will give teachers a framework for developing instructional material and experiences for their students.

The biggest challenge is to change the mindset of teachers who think of teaching as a "skill and drill" opportunity. We must convince them that the goal for adult students must be more varied, as established by the EFF standards. They need to see teaching as a process in which the student is an active learner. Because standards implementation requires a much more active teacher role in designing teaching and learning experiences, teachers must be prepared to leave the security of textbook-driven instruction.

MEYER: Employers in Canton, Ohio, for example, are very impressed with the EFF Passport because it identifies specific skill attainment. Their Passport is designed for learners to take to the workplace so that they can document the specific skills they

have mastered. This gives employers concrete information about the skills a prospective employee possesses.

MCLENDON: It's too soon to know.

MILLER: We are at the beginning stages. We've just completed the first-year planning for continuous improvement but due to the time of year, with summer coming up, we'll have to wait until the fall to do more.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: EFF is the right program for us. Having a consistent customer service curriculum was our most significant need. EFF meets that need and provides the whole picture for learning. We have learned how people integrate the skills they learn throughout their whole lives. Employers are telling us that EFF-trained workers are better workers. They are more confident and have more self-esteem. Job placement rates are up 8%.

OCKERT: In our first full year of implementation (FY01), we had remarkable results with our hard-to-serve Families That Work population. Because of multiple barriers (substance abuse, for instance, coupled with low basic skills), these clients had not been able to find work even in the "boom" years of low unemployment. According to our internal reporting system, which is based on EFF's Broad Areas of Responsibility and Role Indicators, 80% of parents made gains in parenting and family management and 79% made gains in employability. We feel that these accomplishments are the direct result of combining skills training with contextual instruction, and that without the guidance of EFF we would have had a difficult time attaining them.

Our EL/Civics Project was implemented only a year ago and we are still waiting for a full year of data to test EFF's impact on outcomes. Tracking community impacts through interagency data matching will not be possible, so we will have to rely on case studies and traditional assessments. Since EFF is at varying stages of implementation in regular basic skills programs, cause and effect is harder to tease out at this point. However, providers that use EFF are consistently exceeding their National Reporting System targets.

One of the hardest parts of implementation is providing the level of technical assistance needed to achieve momentum. Implementing EFF was hard work, costly, and time intensive. But it has trained staff and changed attitudes – and the short- and

long-term payoff of improving the functional abilities of adults (and thereby their children) is substantial.

SLEDD: Some schools think GED is the end goal of life but it isn't very useful in the home, or in the community, or in working with children. There is more to life than passing the GED. EFF takes that into account.

VAN HORN: Work-based foundation skills built on an expanded EFF model have helped our adult basic education providers work with employers, using a common language. As I said, these programs are very popular and well received. I recently did a presentation of our work to a broad group of community leaders, employers, and others in Miami and New Orleans. They loved it and said: "This makes sense." I believe they will implement it. It resonated with them because it's very concrete and uses concepts employers understand.

ZOBEL: We've just started using EFF and we're working with NIFL on a guide that does more than give a framework. It's more descriptive, a handbook to equip our teachers to do a better job. It's important to note that many people who work in community-based organizations do not have literacy training and experience per se. So this handbook will be extremely useful to them and spell things out more. We expect the first draft next month.

4. IF YOU ARE BETTER OFF USING EFF THAN OTHER APPROACHES, CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY?

ALLEN: The focus on students and on contextualized learning makes a real difference. We are teaching very transferable skills. EFF helps students identify not only what they know, but also what to do with what they know.

CHEEK: EFF has unified the faculty around a clear mission, that of giving the students a voice. We serve a large Ukranian immigrant population which wasn't integrating with the rest of the community. Using EFF principles, we encouraged them to participate in a county fair to show off the skills they have that were unknown to the general community. It worked very well. Good teachers using EFF encouraged the students to do this.

DARLING: What we do when we go into a program with EFF is use the system that's there. We don't try to get them to adopt a new system, but rather to make the system they're already using work better.

HOKAMA: EFF is research-based. So often, as we plan staff development activities or review our expectations of teachers, we find our answers in the field research produced by EFF. For example, when we talk about providing "authentic experiences," we can help teachers by reminding them that such learning experiences can be more manageable if they recognize that a student's purpose for learning can be defined through the different roles.

The standards and the performance indicators have been written with such clarity that they mean the same thing to an administrator, teacher, and students. Too often, standards are written so that only an educator can understand them. When this happens the student cannot understand the expectations and cannot know when he or she has mastered the standard.

When I'm looking for answers, EFF provides plenty of helping documents and a web page with convincing evidence that the teaching and learning being proposed in a program of instruction is logical, valid, and doable.

MCLENDON: We are definitely better off using EFF because it relates to the learning needs of adult learners in several ways. For one thing, it has expertise to help states themselves develop content standards. For another, it's based on years of research, so we can use it and be confident that it's reliable and valid.

MILLER: We've only been working with EFF a short time. We are very specific to GED preparation, and EFF is helpful with the philosophy and principles. EFF application has been difficult for everyday lessons. That's because EFF is very broad and planning lessons takes time. The benefits of using EFF must be weighed against moving students faster toward passing very specific GED tests.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: The dramatic difference is that the curriculum we used previously didn't relate to the rest of the students' lives. With EFF, the students see the whole learning picture. Before, we never heard students talk about integrating retail skills into the rest of their lives. This integration is an important, natural part of EFF. Their attitudes are the same at home and work and they can recognize that. They adjust better and control behavior better. They have learned how people integrate the skills in real life situations. This then makes them better employees.

Teamwork is a good example. How do you teach someone to want to be a member of a team? Through EFF they learn naturally how to be part of a team. You then don't have to 'teach' teamwork.

OCKERT: One of the great things about EFF is that it is adult researched-based and credible. It does not rely on inappropriate extrapolations from child research or on leaps of faith. Another strength is that it is not a curriculum per se but a framework for "testing" best practices and targeting outcomes. It is flexible but structured. It provides plenty of room for traditional skills-building processes, but promotes and informs contextual approaches that are geared to adult learners' needs and desires. In using EFF, we still feel free to "cherry-pick" from a variety of methodologies while not losing our focus on where we are going with them and why.

SLEDD: There is no other system like EFF. You can fit GED or any other objectives into it, and it works with any process you're using. EFF asks: "What do you know and what do you need to know to function?" EFF says: "Let's do it in a real context. In order to read with understanding, here's what a reader does. Here are the steps." Using EFF, students can assess their own skill needs. For example, they see that to set up a budget they don't just need math skills, but also to understand a sequence and to be able to read, write, and have some technical skills.

5. WHAT DATA ARE YOU COLLECTING AND HOW IS IT BEING USED?

CHEEK: Having been part of the research project, we are data heavy. We collect data on student level gains in each of the four subject areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is part of our state data collection system (which feeds into the National Reporting System, NRS). We also collect data on other aspects of student growth, such as getting a job, obtaining citizenship, or moving up to a better job at work. We are using performance assessments to measure competence and gain. For example, if someone is working on medical records, the performance tasks to show competence with medical records would be related to the learning. They assess after every 60 hours of instruction. The state has a general rubric that is used as the basis to measure level gains. It is customized at the local level.

DARLING: In our program with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, data on Native Americans is being collected about literacy and parents. The data is being used by the Bureau. It's incorporated in the reports they release.

MEYER: We are collecting information on student goals based on the role maps and skills wheel. We are listening for what is important in students' lives so that we can

plan lessons that are purposeful and contextual. We are collecting information about which skills students need/want to work on. We are collecting the usual NRS data and also data on how well the students can perform the standards. We look at the different components for a standard and see where the student needs work. Then we do some instruction in those areas and give the student opportunities to practice the entire standard to see if they can do it better. We are collecting information on what students already know or can do to build our lessons around.

MILLER: Data is being collected, though we don't have a whole lot so far. Standards are determined by the previous funders based on passing the GED test. Preliminary information suggests that EFF may lengthen the process in terms of reaching the specific goal of passing the GED. We don't know yet if this is good or bad.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: Placement rates are a little higher – 70% up from 62%. We don't have retention data yet, but employers tell us that the people they hire from our program are better than what they get from other sources. Employers say the employees seem more confident, have more self-esteem.

OCKERT: In the state of Washington, results are being documented in terms of academic achievement, social service outcomes, and work outcomes.

Academic achievement improves employability and access to job skills training for better-paying jobs: According to *The Effects of Adult Education in Welfare-to-Work Programs* (Manpower Development Research Corporation, 2002), the average national GED completion rate for basic skills students is 4%. The GED completion rate for our Families That Work (FTW) students was nearly 3 times that of the best programs cited in the report (29%), despite the fact that over 60% of participants entered with 3rd or 4th grade skills and most (68%) were only permitted six months of training.

Social service outcomes (e.g. substance abuse treatment, anger management): Decreases in social service activities as a result of barrier resolution resulted in more time spent on positive work and family development. The percent of clients who were involved in social service intervention decreased from 100% to 51%. The percent of time spent in social service activities declined from 14.2 hours to 6.1 hours a week.

Work outcomes: The percent of clients engaged in work activities (job search, work experience, subsidized jobs, and unsubsidized work) increased from 25% to 57%. The time spent in work activities also increased from 3.4 hours to 9.4 hours per week. Moreover, even though the focus of the program was stabilization and skills gains for

job search readiness, 35% of clients went into unsubsidized employment within a quarter after training. Previously, none of these clients were able to gain employment, which was why they were referred to FTW in the first place.

VAN HORN: In general, we don't collect a lot of data yet. But initial findings in the Pennsylvania Workforce Improvement Network suggest that the employees are making gains. We need the EFF assessment component, which is still in development and taking too long to emerge. Without this component in place, it's hard to judge outcomes. EFF needs to speed up its assessment work. It also needs to do much more in the area of training. Some people take naturally to the EFF approach because it fits the way they normally teach. But others don't necessarily understand this systemic approach and they must be trained to be able to use the EFF framework. They need to become learners and to understand EFF as a way of learning.

6. DO YOU GET EFF TECHNICAL SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT, AND FROM WHOM?

ALLEN: As a national trainer, I'm part of the support network. Technical support comes from The University of Tennessee. EFF has a listserv. Some rely on Sondra Stein, as well. People in EFF are very accessible.

CHEEK: We get tons of technical support. We also get technical assistance as part of the pilot research project. The state has regional training coordinators who are well versed on EFF. The listserv is very helpful.

HOKAMA : My vice-principal has been EFF-trained. The eleven administrators of the Community Schools have been provided numerous EFF staff development activities. I can call the mentor assigned to us and read the documentation that is readily available to us.

JURMO: I have had a great mentor, which is very important if you are physically and administratively isolated.

MCLENDON: EFF is very responsive and the technical support is excellent, but they are short-staffed and could use more funding to expand this help.

MILLER: We have wonderful technical support from Urban League affiliates and the national office. A woman from the University of Tennessee has also been very helpful.

OCKERT: The technical support available now has certainly evolved from the early days – we are all learning. There are more tools and examples available now. We currently have one staff member here at the Office of Adult Literacy who is a trained EFF facilitator. She not only provides technical assistance to peers in the office, but is also a full-time regional training coordinator. Additionally, for central Washington, there is Joani Allen. She's at EFF's Center for Training and Technical Assistance in Tennessee; programs turn to her for information and support.

SLEDD: Yes, absolutely. We have an EFF listserv and NIFL listservs that are very helpful – and when we phone, the staff is always accessible.

VAN HORN: We've worked with NIFL around EFF-related issues. One person on our staff is involved with the EFF family literacy program as a trainer. The training is process-oriented and she has found that the teachers she's training have difficulty developing their own curriculum. Many teachers are part-time and they don't have the time to develop materials themselves, and not everyone is creative.

7. WHAT KIND OF STAFF TRAINING, IF ANY, HAS BEEN REQUIRED TO APPLY EFF?

ALLEN: EFF has a certification program. If sponsored by your state, you go through the train-the-trainer process with a mentor. Eventually you become certified to train at the state and national level. The intent with EFF is to build state capacity.

DARLING: We have some certified trainers on our staff who have gone through a fairly rigorous process. Staff training has been very comprehensive.

DAVIS: There is a real difference between understanding and implementation. New Jersey has a need for lots of training, professional development, and orientation about EFF. Integration into current programming is the trick. New Jersey has done an excellent job giving everyone a basic understanding of EFF. We have done training orientation on EFF, but have not trained how to incorporate EFF into the curriculum. We have not yet sat down with providers to work with them to implement EFF. This is going to be a difficult task because there are so many providers of literacy and we want them all to integrate EFF.

HOKAMA: We have established the need for the provision of training for new teachers at the beginning of each semester. Evaluations of the staff development opportunities we have provided indicate that teachers find these opportunities very useful.

JURMO: Staff training is vital for EFF to work.

MCLENDON: Each state develops its own cadre of training and research people. EFF provides ongoing technical assistance and training and they are on call all the way. The states set up pilot projects with detailed training. These people then become resource people who go out and train others.

OCKERT: We started by sending local program staff to NIFL-EFF trainings. That approach had mixed success because of the staff turnover that is endemic in basic skills. We now have a regional training coordinator who is a trained EFF facilitator. She works closely with other regional training coordinators and state staff for our professional development in this area, and she provides technical assistance around the state. All state staff have attended at least one training session in EFF and we use this framework extensively in our approach to administration as well as a framework for instruction. So far this approach has provided more intensive and extensive support for implementation.

8. HOW COULD EFF BE MORE WIDELY USED WITHIN YOUR STATE OR PROGRAM TO EXPAND OUTREACH, IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LEARNING, PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES THAT ADULTS REALLY NEED, AND ASSESS EFFECTIVENESS?

ALLEN: Washington has created EFF Support Teams. This is helping to build expertise.

DARLING: EFF needs more than a framework. It needs curriculum and especially assessment. I think some of the assessment is already in development but it would be good if that could be escalated. I know part of the problem is always money, but it could be jump-started.

HOKAMA: My hope is that one day every state and private agency providing adult literacy in our state would use EFF standards. From an educational perspective, it makes sense to do so. In the political arena, it would provide the legislature with a common language and a common perspective in how they evaluate programs and determine which deserve funding.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: We know that New Jersey hopes to do more. We certainly want the state to promote EFF.

JURMO: Ways need to be found to increase understanding of EFF by politicians, other people at the top, and funding organizations. The risk of not doing so is that they will see it as an esoteric, time-wasting exercise and fail to give it the proper support.

MCLENDON: EFF could be more widely used once we have the assessment work in place. The assessment work needs to continue being funded – it's very expensive. They also need to advertise more widely their expertise in helping states develop and deliver training and technical assistance in contents standards.

OCKERT: There is still a lot of work to be done in this area: (1) Most providers in the state have had some level of orientation to EFF, but not all are on board theoretically or functionally. We need to continue with professional development – for both new and continuing staff. We need to be able to provide tangible examples (e.g. tools and videos) that will promote understanding and implementation. Since NIFL-EFF has the national and international overview on research that can help us, it has a special responsibility to keep us informed. (2) What gets measured gets done. We need to make sure that performance measurement aligns with demonstrable skill attainment in an authentic fashion so that we really know if we (students and instructors) have succeeded. To date, there is no truly valid or reliable method to do this. The centralized role of NIFL and EFF will be a great help here. (3) Continuous program improvement is not a destination but a journey. We have to continue learning – explore technologies to use in technical assistance and instruction – and keep up-to-date with changes in society that affect what adults need to know and do in order to be successful. Here again, since NIFL-EFF has the national and international overview on research that can help us, it has an important role to keep us informed.

VAN HORN: EFF staff should rethink some aspects of their training. In Pennsylvania, when most program administrators were asked how to improve their programs, they didn't know what EFF was. Something is missing. EFF staff and trainers, including people adept at providing clear orientations, have to be more widely available to show what EFF is and how to adopt it. Right now, EFF is concentrated in a few pockets in a few states and unless training can be intensified and perhaps in some ways redirected, EFF probably won't be as widely implemented in Pennsylvania as it could be. That would be a shame because it has a lot of value.

ZOBEL: By increasing resources and training.

9. HOW IMPORTANT IS EFF TO YOUR FUTURE? WHAT IF IT WERE TO DISAPPEAR?

CHEEK: Washington wants to continue performance-based instruction and assessment. If EFF were to disappear tomorrow, what we would lose would be very significant, right now and in the future. Presently, we are at a developmental stage with EFF. Only one of the standards has been fully developed, and the tasks for that standard are being piloted. Once this entire template is complete, there will be an opportunity to use this, and other standards, as a framework for standardizing and ensuring consistent quality in *all* ABE and ESL programs. But we're not there yet. If EFF is cut off, we will be back at square one in our national efforts to standardize and identify quality adult education. It would set us back at least 10 years.

DARLING: It's not that family literacy programs couldn't go on without EFF, but having said that, we need standards and a framework around those standards on which we can develop our curriculum. Whether they are right for everyone I can't say, but the EFF standards were developed in a very methodical way. States are now required under the new law to come up with standards. EFF is what we have and the EFF standards were developed with a great deal of field consultation and effort to make the system into something the field could really use. At this stage, I think it would be useful if those standards could be vetted with a few more top researchers.

DAVIS: New Jersey is just getting started with EFF. It's the framework the state has chosen to use. It would be detrimental to the state if EFF were to cease to exist.

HOKAMA: If EFF disappeared tomorrow, we would lose focus and coherence. Teachers would go back to doing their own thing and students would not have consistency as they move from one level to the next. Most importantly, we would not have meaningful accountability for student learning. This is important to me. If I had to, I could probably use any assessment to measure some aspects of student learning, but I want to be certain to be measuring what is important and meaningful for students. I'm not sure that I could do that without EFF. We use CASAS as an assessment for reporting to NRS. But I don't want to limit student learning to the skills tested by CASAS.

MEYER: We are working to incorporate EFF more and more and to help our state and federal systems use EFF so that we can align what we are doing. If EFF were to disappear at the federal and/or state level, we would still use it locally. But without the state and feds using it we would never be able to fully implement it, because we would not have ways to articulate our results and what we are doing in terms of the grants and documentation systems they give us. We are also waiting for the EFF

assessment system to be finished. If EFF were to end today we would never have it, so we could only implement EFF so far. We could change our teaching, but then we would have to assess the same old way.

MCLENDON: If EFF were to disappear it would be tragic – seven years of hard work and diligent research gone to waste.

MILLER: Because we use EFF in a GED program, I'm not yet sure how central it is to what we do. I like the idea of EFF and contextual learning, but we haven't been at it very long and I don't know if our particular program would be seriously affected if EFF were to disappear.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: It's the mainstay of what we do. We don't want to go back.

OCKERT: Much of what we have learned so far would continue in some form, but the loss of EFF would deflate future progress because the state on its own simply does not have the resources to pursue the things that need to be done. Without the EFF research base and continuous developments based on that research, we would almost certainly lose momentum.

Research-based best practice is the cornerstone of nearly all government and educational reform in the U.S. The value of having that research basis specifically regarding the education of adults cannot be over-emphasized. EFF establishes legitimacy for changes that are difficult to implement in tradition-bound environments. It provides guidance for problem solving. And it looks into the future in a way that resource-strapped states cannot since we must principally focus on delivering services in the here and now.

It won't be just the Adult and Family Literacy system that loses if EFF goes away. Other projects will suffer as well, because the root cause of project success is the ability of people to carry out their responsibilities. Investing in adult basic skill competency pays off in many ways, not necessarily captured in grammar tests.

SLEDD: It would be a great loss. Even if the name EFF were to disappear, the sound principles and techniques should remain. I'm proud that I learned it and will always use it to guide my work as a trainer working with adult teachers. It empowers adults.

VAN HORN: If development were discontinued, I think programs that have been introduced to the framework would continue to use it, but without the assessment piece. Role maps and standards, the idea of getting adults and teachers to think about what they are doing, will go on. But a lot of money and effort has been spent on this. It would be a shame if it were discontinued or not finished, because it has come so far and has so much value.

ZOBEL: If EFF were to disappear, the quality of outcomes might be significantly different. That is to say, the synergy that has been developed between learning to be an effective learner and employing that learning in a real life context would be disrupted. Without EFF, people would fall back on the old methods, which haven't worked.

10. IS THERE SUFFICIENT AWARNESS AT THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL OF THE EFF PROGRAM AND WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER? WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO IMPROVE AWARENESS?

ALLEN: Awareness is increasing, but I don't think there is ever enough. The biggest issue is funding. EFF is system reform so it involves initial costs to get people thinking differently. Enculturation takes time and money, and support from the top.

DARLING: I don't think there is sufficient awareness of it. The way to improve it would be to have it embraced by the adult education system, including some of the funding that goes for education. Again, I think it would be advantageous at this stage for the standards to be reviewed some more researchers so that adult educators have more to stand behind.

CHEEK: I'm not sure and I don't know what is happening in Washington, DC. I think it is important that NIFL understand how significant EFF is. EFF needs to have more of a connection with the workplace. We must be able to show EFF's connection to workplace skills and competencies.

HOKAMA: I don't have enough access to the national level to answer this. I know from the documents I read that the national level is aware of EFF. Is it enough? I don't think it's going to be enough until EFF is pervasive in its implementation across all states.

MOORHOUSE AND CONRAD: There needs to be more awareness, even in the states that have adopted it. We would like to expand our EFF to curriculum for youth in

workforce preparation and vocational education but have found that our partners don't know about EFF. We'd like to get EFF integrated intp the workforce development system. So far it's been more of the literacy system. EFF could be part of a whole accountability system. This is appealing with workforce training.

JURMO: I think there is now less and less awareness of EFF. I just came back from a two-day, national colloquium on workplace learning research in Washington, DC. Only a few of the 50 or so people in the room knew about EFF and it was barely acknowledged when people were struggling to define "work-based basic skills" and other topics that EFF has done so much work on. It seems that the U.S. Department of Education is being pushed back to an overly-simplistic definition of "literacy" as non-contextualized, isolated pieces of reading, writing, and 'rithmetic.

MCLENDON: Many states have been involved with EFF, but others have not. We need to bring awareness to those other states. There's a lot of turnover in state education directors. It would be a good idea for EFF to brief and provide technical assistance to those new state directors. EFF needs a broader outreach effort. As for the federal level, everyone in the field wants EFF to continue but some in the Department of Education question it. EFF should also have briefings for the Department of Education staff with emphasis on the research base and the contribution it can make to the administration's reading initiative.

OCKERT: I suspect that when we have full implementation on some scale which is evaluated through a valid and reliable assessment system, we will be able to capture more support of decision-makers who care about family and community development. I suggest that we (locally and nationally) work closely with organizations which focus on common goals, inform them about what we are doing in adult education through EFF approaches that contribute to the achievement of those goals, and, hopefully, they will become advocates for this approach as well.

There is a national skills gap reported throughout workforce studies which cite again and again the need for greater basic skills competency. I think that the more employers understand the EFF approach, the more they would play a role in supporting it.

Parent education levels and involvement in children's education are key elements in all reports on improving K-12 school outcomes for children. We should work together on family literacy.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and other foundations have demonstrated that community development requires comprehensive strategies. Communities are

greatly affected by the adults' ability to positively impact their environment through being informed and communicating effectively. This ability requires basic skills competency.

SLEDD: There definitely is not sufficient knowledge. State directors need to get behind EFF and encourage more training. Also, not enough people know how it has progressed, how far it has come, and how comprehensive the package is.

VAN HORN: There definitely is not enough awareness. Issues of assessment and validity need to be openly addressed, in terms that legislators and leaders can understand. There is a very strong case for EFF's value and validity, but NIFL needs to make that case better. I'd also urge that implementation and training be done on a much more widespread basis, although I know this is a matter of funding. And it would help users and potential users if NIFL would come right out and give a date when the assessment component will be finished and launched. That is crucial. Right now, we're in limbo; it's still not available in one piece. Once we have it all, we should be able to demonstrate EFF's effectiveness by showing learner gains in specific areas.

ZOBEL: We need more EFF champions who are recognized and highly regarded by public officials and the public at large. We need human-interest stories, people who are recognizable and can demonstrate real results.

III. CONCLUSION: STAYING THE COURSE

There have been only a few true turning points in adult education and literacy over the years. Equipped for the Future is one of them. It is formidable in design and execution, built on a rich and varied foundation of research and practice. While not a panacea, EFF has the potential to reform the system at all levels and in a major way. The kind and number of users has grown steadily and continues to grow, both nationally and internationally.

The users who participated in this round of interviews have important roles in implementing EFF and while they don't necessarily speak for all of the thousands of teachers, administrators, and students who are using EFF, most of them hold special vantage points and their responses are telling. The majority are enthusiastic about EFF, even *relieved* that this much-needed tool is finally available. Most clearly see it as vital to their current and future programming, and for the system-wide reform that they believe is needed. When asked to imagine a future without EFF, most describe serious, in some cases disastrous, setbacks to their efforts to improve the quality of literacy services and program accountability.

EFF has so far managed to deliver a remarkable return on a modest investment. Its history and myriad accomplishments demonstrate how NIFL's painstaking, step-by-step planning has led to a reliable framework by which to guide standards, curriculum development, and the accountability and assessment so critically needed for outstanding teaching and learning – and so frequently called for by federal officials today.

Of course, despite the momentum and all the gains, EFF is still a work in progress. There is much implementation and assessment work still to do. A far wider range of training services and orientation activities are needed. There is also a need

for continued, systematic collection of meaningful outcome data over time, and at least one interview response points to the need for a better understanding of the kinds of programs and settings in which EFF works best.

Most importantly, however, the same sense of purpose that led to EFF's creation and funding in the first place is needed now – on the part of state legislatures, the federal government, and adult education and literacy service providers across the country. If we are to reach the goals of adult education and literacy sought by Congress, emphasized in study after study, acted on by NIFL in one of its most visionary leadership roles, and long desired by educators and students generally, it is imperative that EFF be maintained, further developed, and fully implemented – and that it be funded now and in the coming years at a level required to do this.

It is to be hoped that we will have the wisdom and the will to stay the course.

APPENDIX: Suggested Reading

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